



COMITATO NAZIONALE
PER LE RICERCHE NUCLEARI

Cavalli

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Dear Joshua,

Dec. 19, 1959

This letter of mine is long overdue.

But the last weeks I have been burdened with ~~so~~ many events ~~skxxxxxx~~ and duties, and I have awaited a better time for writing you, also in view of being thus able to give you a more objective account of the events. I am now between two committee meetings and have had the first relaxed day since months, and so feel the time has come to write you.

By far the worst event of the last months has been the outcome of the Parma competition. As I may have told you, we had technically lost the elections, which had taken place in June, because the committee members whom we hoped would be elected by the body of professors of the Faculty of Science for the Genetics competition were not all elected; in particular, Barigozzi had not enough votes, while Montalenti and Schreiber ^{to get in} managed. Thus, the trio of committee members which competed with our champions: Jucci, Chiarugi (botanist at Florence) and Stefanelli (embryologist, Rome) were elected. It was not clear at the beginning, nor indeed, to the very end what their real intentions were, except that Jucci would champion his own pupils: Frizzi, Milani, Manunta, and ~~Chiarugi~~ Chiarugi would bring forth his own, namely Battaglia. ^{Em. Co} The position of Stefanelli was somewhat uncertain, although he declared repeatedly that he had no direct interests (nor indeed had he any pupils among the candidates) and that he was only interested in supporting the "naturalists" among the candidates, namely Frizzi and Battaglia, but he would have recognized to me the place of honour (what honour!).

Things being as they were, the only hope for obtaining the necessary majority in the committee was to sacrifice one of the eldest geneticists who among the candidates seemed fittest for the trio of "winners" (that is, Ruggero, Giovanni and myself). The competition having been asked by Parma University it seemed clear that the one to be sacrificed would not be me, and there was some disagreement between Schreiber and Montalenti whether it should be Giovanni or Ruggero to be sacrificed. However it was clear that one of the three winning places should have been offered either to Jucci for, say, Frizzi, or to Chiarugi for Battaglia. Frizzi being a more satisfactory candidate than Battaglia, the choice was made for him, and Schreiber had apparently succeeded in getting Jucci to our side, and got promise from him that we would be satisfied with the second place for Frizzi, and would consider voting for Giovanni as third. ^{also} Stefanelli had to some extent been convinced that this would have been a fair outcome.

The committee worked for about seven days examining the ^{paps of the} thirteen candidates, and everything went almost smoothly, but the real verdict ~~was~~ given by the vote at the end. Only Montalenti and Schreiber voted for me at the first place, while the other three voted for Frizzi, who was therefore elected. Montalenti voted Cappelletti as second, Schreiber insisted again on my name, but Battaglia got the second place. Eventually all agreed on my name as the



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third.

Thus, Ruggero and Giovanni will have to wait for another competition (but where or when?). There may be one of Medical Genetics for Ruggero, but it is not clear whether ~~that~~ will please Gedda or not to have Ruggero along with him in the trio of winners. For Giovanni the situation is gloomier, except that at least in the next competition of Genetics Buzzati can get into the committee, if he is elected, while he could not get into this one for nepotism rules.

As far as I am concerned, I have been meanwhile nominated by Parma University but the nomination is not valid until the first and second have been nominated elsewhere. This must happen within two years, otherwise the first or second, if still not nominated, may be imposed to Parma, and those who have found meanwhile no chairs ~~may have to wait~~ will have to wait until the next competition, or go to hell.

Needless to say, we have all been depressed and irritated by the outcome. I am sure the feudal outlook of all this will seem incomprehensible to you, or at least ridiculous. But the major rule of University competitions here is that examiners consider it their duty and right to struggle for their own pupils, (which are, clearly, an extension of their ego). There is however one other tradition, which in the present case was violated: namely, that the person responsible for having the competition called by a University gets the prize of the first place, even if ~~that~~ it does not belong to him and in fact, usually ~~in~~ ^{with} total disregard of his own merits and demerits. It is not clear whether in the present case I was degraded to the third place merely for the pleasure of displeasing me or us, or for sincere belief that the others were better than me, or merely as a manoeuvre to please Jucci and thus to get rid of any serious competitor for Battaglia. Also, the position of Stefanelli is not clear in all this, but the reason why he accepted to electioneer as a prospective committee member, and change his former opinions on myself ~~xxxxxx~~ are likely to be the prospects of promotion, or a prize (5 to 20 million liras) by the Academy of the Lineei, where Chiarugi is powerful.

The damage is that, apart from seriously hampering my own position, and even more so that of Ruggero and Giovanni, at least one of the winners, Battaglia (not to be confused with another Battaglia, Bruno, a Dobzhanskyite) is but a mediocre botanist with a very poor reputation from the human point of view. Frizzi is not too bad, except that his knowledge of Genetics is rather limited and outfashioned, and that if he has learned from his master the hypocrisy and trickery which he has shown in the present case, the field of genetics in Italy will have to deal with another sonofabitch.

I hope I am not shocking you too much with all this, but it is a much more moderate sample of what I would have written one or two weeks ago. The competition was ended on Dec. 1.

Fortunately, this was the only really disgraceful event in the last months. I have partially consoled myself with selling some shares ~~with~~ which went up considerably meanwhile, and buying myself the prettiest ~~one~~ (to my tastes and



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needs) car on the Italian market: a Fiat 2100 station wagon. It is the only car which is still within the (relatively) cheap range and can take all the family. It is an absolute beauty, and even if sort of inadequate for the average scientist, ~~ixxi~~ has given me immeasurable pleasure during the 70 kilometers which I have so far travelled with it.

Needless to say: I was very pleased that, on the Italian side, no ~~diff-~~
~~xxxx~~ ficulty at all has been made for your addition to our group. As to the American side I think everything will be as smooth, although there may be some delay in getting their final, and written word because of their present troubles with the American Senate. As Giovanni wrote you at length about it, I will not insist on it, but trust on seeing you here in January. We might come to Nice, but we expect exactly on those days an important visit (American fund administrator) and the time necessary to us to travel by car to Nice may make it dangerous because it may force us to miss this visit. On the other hand, Nice has good air connections with Milan and you may get your return fare from here as well, or better than from Nice. Or you may first land here from the States, except of course if you fly jet, in which case a stopover will be necessary, as I don't believe jets can land in Milan (but I may be wrong).

I think I would like to spend the summer in Stanford, as planned, and hope you are still of the same idea. We might discuss details in Nice. I am not yet aware of the dates of the UNO and WHO symposium on epidemiological genetics which I want to attend, but am writing now to get information on this point, which should have been settled by now. They had a change of dates in their mind. If it happened to break my visit, rather than delay its beginning (as was likely at first) I will see what I can do with raising funds for the extra journey.

Have you any further information on it?
I am looking forward to seeing you soon. And would like to ask you a favour. You may remember that one of the last experiments I made when in Madison was on a "double mode of entry". I do not have here any notes, and remember distinctly that I ~~have~~ do not have, in Pavia, exact notes about this experiment, especially about the strains employed. I remember however that the male was Hfr₂, and the female Gal-Lp^hTry-~~x~~ plus something else. The experiment consisted in scoring ~~the~~ Gal⁺ or Try⁺ recombinants for the other markers, and showed that Lp but not Try entered after Gal beginning with the 25th minute, while Try entered later (35'), at first without Gal or Lp, then followed shortly by them. I would like to continue this experiment here, now that Miss Barbara Fargie will start working here in January and wants to practise on K-12. We have other things boiling in the lab, but still so uncertain and messy that I do not like to write about them.

All the best to Esther. We did not find the painting (print on cloth) she asked, which was out of stock. May be next month it will be in stock again. I must write her but in a way I do not want to, because I have to blame her



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for not quoting my 1953 or 1956 paper with Jinks, which was the first proof of linkage of F (Hfr) with bacterial markers, in her otherwise delightful Gal paper. It seems too silly to write a letter for this purpose, and I wait until I have a more substantial, and cheerful subject to speak of.

All the best, and let us know about your Nice programmes,

Luca

P.S. Parma University *will* have its own missile programme too. Is it not fantastic? Still the people at it are very good physicists.